Understanding that a one-size fits all approach is not our only option, this legislation promotes the opportunity for choice of management of yard clippings as dirt or power.

Michigan landfill resources provide environmental benefits and protection. The addition of yard waste improves overall gas production and stability of the waste pile. Furthermore, landfill gas is considered base load power, available 24/7/365. Energy from landfill gas can continue to be harvested for 20 to 30 years after the landfill closes.

The environmental benefits of landfill gas projects are real. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), for every 3 megawatts generated, enough energy is produced to power 1,900 average-sized homes. From the addition of yard waste alone, the average increased generation per landfill facility would be 2.2 megawatts[1] at peak—or power for nearly 1,400 households. Again, this is (on average) per facility, simply from the addition of yard waste.

Certainly the significance of this renewable energy source can be argued based on the comparison applied. To demonstrate the importance landfill gas projects can make, I would reference our partnership with the Lansing Board of Water and Light (LBWL). Our two Lansing area landfills transmit electricity to LBWL. Specifically, we provide 11.2 megawatts of capacity to power more than 10,000 average-sided homes in the LBWL territory. This electricity amounts to slightly more than 5 percent of their retail sales. This is significant.

Thanks to the advances in landfill management and landfill gas-to-energy technology, we now have this additional option for the management of leaves, grass and tree trimmings. The reasons for the original ban, to conserve space and promote recycling, can be addressed by a landfill utilizing yard clippings for energy production—a new form of recycling.

We have intentionally avoided comparisons between landfills and compost operations. We believe these management practices can successfully co-exist. There are economic and environmental benefits to both handling options. There are also economic and environmental challenges to both handling options. The reality is that landfills are equally capable of responsibly processing yard clippings into a beneficial product.

We encourage your support of House Bills 4265 and 4266 to increase renewable energy production from landfills in Michigan.

[1] Examining Increased Renewable Energy Production from Landfill Gas in Michigan, June 2007 (with January 2008 addendum)

Testimony to the House Energy and Technology Committee
In Support of House Bills 4265 and 4266
By Granger

Chairman Horn and committee members, I would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on House Bills 4265 and 4266. My name is Tonia Olson. I serve as director of governmental and community relations for Granger.

Granger is a third-generation, family-owned, Lansing-based business. Our more than 220 associates provide waste and recycling hauling services and operate two landfills, a recycling center, and a compost facility, and produce renewable energy from landfill gas.

It was one year ago that you first heard testimony on the idea of an exemption to the existing yard waste ban for the purpose of increasing energy production from landfills. For many of you, this was your first exposure to the idea, but the discussion on this topic has been taking place for the last five years.

Granger started the conversation because there continues to be increased demand for Michigan-produced alternative energy. And, we know that landfills can help meet the demand.

In 1985, we were the first in Michigan to develop and implement a commercial scale landfill gas project. Today we operate 16 projects in six states. Our eight Michigan projects have a current combined capacity of slightly more than 40 megawatts or enough electricity to power more than 24,000 average sized homes.

Much work has been done since you first heard testimony in late February last year. Representative Opsommer convened a workgroup of interested parties, the department was consulted, and compost sites, as well as landfills with energy projects were visited. Over this time, concerns were heard and, as a result, you have improved language in the draft 2 substitutes before you today.

While the purpose remains the same—to increase renewable energy production from landfills in Michigan—several practical solutions are now included to create equity.

The draft 2 substitutes for HB 4265 and 4266 require:

1. The generator (homeowner) to continue to separate yard clippings from trash when placed out for collection. The benefits of this are two-fold:

    a. The role for the homeowners does not change. They will not need to be educated (or re-educated) based on the final disposition of the material.

    b. Either type of collection truck (trash or yard waste) will have equal access to the yard clippings to utilize for processing into renewable energy or compost.

2. Separated yard clippings can be disposed of in a landfill if, in addition to meeting existing regulatory requirements, the facility has an active gas collection system that is recorded in the operating record. Additionally, the gas must be productively used as power for electricity, direct-use or as a substitute for conventional fuels.

3. The landfill will annually report the amount of landfill gas recovered, how it was utilized and any flaring that occurred.